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NEWS
FROM YOUR MUSEUM
THE ROYAL ONTARIO MUSEUM

Know your Museum better

No. 13 TORONTO March, 1942

TACTICS, 60 MILLION YEARS AGO

Weapons of offense and defense are as old as the hills. Study of the skeletons of Alberta dinosaurs in the Royal Ontario Museum reveals many ways in which these giant reptiles were equipped to kill or to avoid being killed. Offensive tactics normally were employed only by flesh-eating dinosaurs. They brought to bear on their prey the sharp claws of their powerful hind limbs and the dagger-like teeth in their jaws. No doubt they had the spirit of offense too.

For defense against these flesh-eaters some plant-eating dinosaurs developed armour. In a sense they anticipated the battleship and tank. But they were not entirely equipped merely to ward off attack. Some had a club-like end to their tail which no doubt came into play against an attacker. Others were equipped with strong pointed horns on the head, one projecting from the nose and one over each eye. These were the horned dinosaurs. They were further protected by a great bony shield which extended from the head back over the vulnerable neck.

The very common duck-billed dinosaurs did not possess any special tactical structures. Instead, they adapted themselves to life in the water and became good swimmers. Thus they escaped the purely terrestrial flesh-eaters.

THE EARLY BIRD AND THE LATE WORM

The early bird does not always get the worm. According to ornithologists of the Royal Ontario Museum migratory birds sometimes arrive back in March before worms are available. Those returning are often exposed to snow and sleet storms which render their source of food inaccessible. Late March is a critical time for migrants and many may perish through starvation and lowered resistance. Therefore, if you are one who enjoys attracting birds to your garden by offering them food, make a special effort when belated storms strike your area. Actually it is much more important to feed the early migrant than the winter resident, such as the hardy chickadee. Winter birds are adapted to conditions of ice and snow.

Returning to the subject of worms--the Royal Ontario Museum is interested in the study of earthworms as well as all other animals in the province. But there are still many items of their natural history that are abstruse. For example, it is still a question whether or not any of our earthworms are native or not; what is their effect on the soil of forest and farm; what are their seasonal movements; etc. If you have information concerning any of these questions, your Museum in Toronto will be pleased to have it.

Open WEEK DAYS except MONDAY 10 a.m. - 5 p.m.
SUNDAYS 2 p.m. - 5 p.m.

SCIENCE IN RUSSIA

The most complete and modern text on the classification of fishes has just been published. Where? What country is concerned with the classification of fishes these days? The answer is, Russia! The "most complete and modern" is the estimate of Professor J.R. Dymond of the Royal Ontario Museum who is a specialist in the study of fish. The book in question is written in both English and Russian and its author is Professor Leo. S. Berg. It was published by the Zoological Museum of the Academy of Sciences, Leningrad. Museum scientists on this continent are wondering if the stock of this book survived the bombings of that great city. They will cherish the possession of the copies received in the new world.

B. C. TO THE RESCUE

Mercury is a liquid metal, incidentally the heaviest liquid known. According to Dr. V.B. Meen of the Royal Ontario Museum it is the chief constituent of cinnabar a mineral as red as milady's rouge.

In past years most of Canada's supply of cinnabar came from Spain. Now, this source is virtually cut off just when our demand for mercury is greatest. The demand is not because we need more thermometers or mirrors. We need mercury for the manufacture of explosives.

Mercury combines with other metals, such as silver, gold, and tin. In one of its chemical compounds, it becomes an explosive of terrific force. Very recently a deposit of cinnabar was discovered in British Columbia representative samples of which are on display in the Royal Ontario Museum.

CANNEL COAL

People often wonder why cannel coal, a favourite grate fuel, sputters and crackles as it burns with a bright flame. It is formed almost entirely from the little spores of plants which lived millions of years ago. A spore is that part of a flowerless plant which performs the function of seeds. Cannel coal is particularly rich in oils and gas which explode when the coal burns. Visitors to the Royal Ontario Museum will find a large variety of coals exhibited in its geology galleries.

A. R. P.

Museum authorities are alert to the necessity of safeguarding the public treasures and are taking definite steps to protect the Royal Ontario Museum in case of air raids.